



Newsletter –
14 November
2024

ALL MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

EXCO/OFFICE/RESOURCES/
EVENTS/ADVERTS

From the SAMA ExCo

A few weeks back, I delivered a talk at a Mothers Community Centre and I thought it would be so opportune to share it with all our members, as after all we are all working with mothers every day:

I spoke on the journey of nurturing our children and helping them grow into independent, confident individuals, all through the lens of Montessori parenting.

As moms, we naturally have this instinct to protect, to guide, and to support. We hold our children's hands from their first steps and dream about their futures. But Montessori reminds us of something special—that our children come into this world with their own inner strength, a natural drive to learn and discover on their own. Our role is to create an environment that allows them to blossom at their own pace, with love, patience, and gentle guidance.

Montessori parenting is a journey from nurture to independence, where we shift from doing everything for them to doing things with them, and eventually letting them do things by themselves. This isn't always easy—sometimes it's faster and easier to jump in and help. But Montessori teaches us that when we step back, we create the space for our children to step forward, to try, to make mistakes, and to grow.

Imagine your toddler trying to put on their shoes. They struggle a bit, maybe even put them on the wrong feet a couple of times. It's so tempting to reach down and fix it. But by waiting, by giving them a chance to solve it themselves, we're nurturing something beyond just the skill of putting on shoes—we're nurturing a belief in their own capabilities. We're saying, "I trust you. I believe in you." Those words may not be spoken, but in our patience, they are deeply felt.

One of the core principles of Montessori parenting is "help me do it myself." And that looks different at every stage. For babies, it may be allowing them to explore their movements without too much interference. For toddlers, it might be setting up a child-sized area where they can reach their clothes, pick out what to wear, and even dress themselves. By giving them these small responsibilities, we're saying, "I see you. I see your efforts, and I honour them."

At its heart, Montessori is about respect. It's about respecting the person our child is today and not just the person they will become. It's about slowing down, listening, and observing. By honouring our children's unique rhythms and giving them the freedom to explore safely, we're helping them build a sense of independence that will serve them for a lifetime.

This journey also teaches us, as mothers, to embrace patience and presence. We're learning to trust the process and to trust our children, even when their journey doesn't look exactly how we imagined. We're learning that our

role is to be a steady guide, someone who encourages, provides, and steps back to watch as they discover their own abilities.

When we embrace Montessori at home, we start to notice that our children are naturally drawn to learning, helping, and growing. We don't have to push them; we simply have to create a world where they feel safe, capable, and inspired. And so we fill their space with tools and opportunities—small pitchers for pouring, reachable shelves with items they can choose from, and materials that encourage open-ended play and creativity. Each item becomes a small step toward independence, a moment where they realize, "I did it!"

To every mother here, know that this journey isn't about perfection. It's about presence. Each day, we're laying down the foundation of trust, self-confidence, and resilience. We are nurturing not just their minds, but their spirits, guiding them as they grow into compassionate, capable, and courageous individuals.

So here's to every tiny milestone, every "I did it" moment, and every time we let go just a little so they can spread their wings. Let's continue this journey with open hearts, patience, and the knowledge that we're helping raise individuals who will one day stand strong, because we chose to trust in their journey.

Thank you, amazing Montessorians, for walking this path with such love and dedication. Here's to nurturing children's independence, one beautiful step at a time.

Nicky Rodseth
SAMA President

SAMA Office

This will be our last Office Newsletter for 2024 and as we all race to the end of the year activities we would like to extend our deepest gratitude to each and every adult in each and every Montessori School who serves the children in their communities and nurtures their human potential every day.

It is hard work, we see you and hear you and we look forward to serving you in 2025 exploring support groups for Heads in the management and leadership of their schools as well as much needed professional development for the assistant and the guide in the classroom.

*To the adult that guides with a steady hand,
Creating a world where young minds expand,
With patience deep and wisdom bright,
You nurture each soul, a guiding light.*

*In rooms where laughter freely flows,
Where curiosity blooms and knowledge grows,
You plant the seeds of thought and care,
And tend them with love beyond compare.*

*With Montessori's gentle way,
You lead your community every day.
A world of freedom, respect, and grace,
You guide each child to find their place.
Through hands-on learning, hearts set free,
You help them grow and to simply be.*

*A beacon of hope, calm and clear,
In a world where each child's voice we hear.*

*To you, dear Principal, we honour you, appreciating how you get us through.
Thank you for your endless care,
For every child, everywhere*

Feedback from the Tier School representatives

We would like to extend our gratitude to all the schools who have accepted appointments during this last term of 2024, and also those who committed to early next year. We understand that these are both very busy times in your school calendars and appreciate you making time for this self-evaluation process.

A reminder that the purpose of this visit is:

1. For SAMA to connect with the Member schools choosing to affiliate with our organization.
2. For the school to reflect on their Montessori practices through a self-evaluation process based on the 6 fundamental principles accepted by members in 2011.
3. For SAMA to establish where the schools might need support, provide a feedback report and guide them to improve/refine their implementation of the 6 fundamental Montessori principles.
4. To encourage networking with fellow Montessorians, to motivate schools to extend a hand of collaboration and working together with each other, for the greater good of Montessori in South Africa, in order to serve the children of South Africa.

Moving the child to the preschool, not the preschool to the child - The importance of Toddlers transitioning to the next class when they are ready

It is beneficial to toddlers' development when they show signs of readiness for new and bigger challenges that we move the child to preschool instead of moving the preschool to them.

What do I mean by moving the preschool to them? Often Toddler guides observe that the older children in their class are in need of more stimulation, are becoming disruptive in their class, and are perhaps even showing signs of interest in the preschool class. In this situation, yes, the child is saying I am ready for more, but what happens is that the guide sometimes begins moving elements of the preschool class into the Toddlers class. It is often the Sensorial materials that are moved to the Toddlers Class, sometimes even non-Montessori materials like those condensed materials with only five cubes, prisms, or cylinders.

These activities are brought into the Toddlers class where there are many younger children, who are not ready for the training of the senses in a way that a child of 2 ½ is. Yes, the younger children need to explore through their senses but are not quite ready for the structure of the preschool presentations. The Toddler class is therefore not then the best place to house the Sensorial material.

The Sensorial material in all its grandeur (and ten pieces) should remain in the preschool, where it can be worked with to its fullest potential, surrounded by other preschoolers who are role models for the young sensorial explorer who has entered. This young 2 ½ year old is then in absolute awe of the materials and the class, soaking up every moment! They are so content to be where they need to be that they transition so smoothly because the transition was made at the right time. In my experience, children who transition too late and who have already experienced half of the Sensorial materials are robbed of the full experience.

In a well-functioning Toddler class, there should be so much Practical Life activity to satisfy the child. This is the work of the younger child! Once they are walking and their hands are free for work, they long to do the work they see the beloved adults around them doing. Examples of the type of activities are: sweeping, cleaning the windows, watering plants, raking leaves, sweeping paths, washing dishes, arranging (and re-arranging) flowers - the list never ends.

There can be as much language material as the guide can provide, introducing more and more detail, diversifying the topics, and following the child's interests. Spoken language should be a great focus - naming, having many conversations, playing the Question Game, and bringing awareness to sounds in words, but not Sandpaper letters! Equally, the child's Mathematical Mind should be given much practice in judging the quantity of water to be poured for drinking, how many plates are needed for lunch, how much is too much water in the bucket, but not the Sandpaper Numbers, not yet!

There is a time and place for the preschool work and it's in the preschool. So please consider moving the child, not the materials.

By: Emma Medell

Reflection on practices - Sensorial extensions in the Montessori classroom

While doing school visits, we have seen laminated control cards of the extensions, on the Sensorial shelves, for the: Pink Tower, Broad Stair, Red Rods, Knobless Cylinders, Constructive Triangles, etc.

This is worrying, as these prepared pattern cards stifle the child's creativity.

They are sold by many suppliers although they are not Montessori, but rather somebody came up with them years ago (I seem to recall it being a traditional teacher). This seems to be true for many materials showing up in toddler environments: 5 block pink towers, 5 broad stairs, 5 red rods, 5 knobbed and knobless cylinders. Just because they are sold does not make them Montessori. As a critical component in our prepared environments, we encourage discernment when setting up the environments, ensuring that the learning environments meet detailed Montessori specifications for the plane of development, that the directress may be able to offer expert presentations of the activities and use of the resources. Refer back to Dr Montessori's writings, reach out to respected Montessori elders and consultants or facilitate workshop through collaboration with fellow Montessorians to workshop essential materials, to make sure what you are actually spending your money on is indeed a necessary material.

The importance of having **extensions** is that the children are supposed to **independently come up with them on their own**, to show their creativity & curiosity (as Dawn says), and for us to observe the child thinking "out of the box".

Jacky remembers Micheal Dorer, years ago, taking exception to them being in the classroom.

By giving them the laminated control cards of extensions, it becomes a purely matching activity (says Jacky).

I remember from my AMI training that the Sensorial extensions are:

- Building or matching **at a distance** (visual memory);
- Building **different ways** (can you find a different way to build it?);
- Take one away & see **which one is missing**;
- **Grading/sequencing** (e.g. from the darkest to the lightest/heaviest to the lightest);
- Using a **blindfold** or a **stereognostic bag** to identify (tactile/stereognostic sense & language);
- **Linking** to the environment (can you see something similar in the room, or the outside world);
- Using comparative **language** or adjectives, (give me the biggest; find me one that is heavier/darker/two times longer than this one/etc.).

The extensions are only 'discovered' once the child has mastered the initial presentation through repetition. The sensorial material is such that it allows the child to freely explore beyond the initial presentation and make these 'discoveries' for themselves - never shown by the guide by giving them a control card on how to do them but rather discoveries made by the child.

Cané Lake – with input from Dawn Brochenin, Jacky Price, Mariana van Niekerk and Irmgard.

Rewards and punishment in the Montessori classroom

The 3rd fundamental principle and particularly the use of the “Thinking chair” in many of our member schools’ classrooms requires a deep understanding of the purpose of discipline and exploration of alternative approaches. Here are some of the links shared by the SAMA Tier Representatives who are visiting the schools. As noted in one of these links, discipline is primarily a learning experience.

<https://www.montessori.org/discipline-alternatives-for-the-montessori-classroom-home/>
<https://themontessorinotebook.com/montessori-approach-to-discipline>

Heads of School breakfasts coming up KZN

🎄 Join Us for Breakfast & Holiday Giving Back! 🎄

This holiday season, let’s come together to share a light breakfast and make a meaningful difference for a local school in need! You’re invited to our Breakfast & Gift Packing Event where we’ll enjoy a delicious light breakfast together and pack Christmas presents for students at Ekuthuleni.

Event Details:

📅 Date: Saturday 30th November

🕒 Time: 9am to 11am

📍 Location: Montessori Life, 7 Little Nook, Sunningdale, Durban

Let’s celebrate the spirit of giving by bringing joy to the children of Ekuthuleni.

Ekuthuleni has spent this year transitioning to a Montessori school, so we are happy to receive any Montessori equipment you no longer need, classroom supplies, and any gift items you may like to include for the school’s children. There are 60 pupils at the school in need of support and holiday cheer. We’ll have all the supplies for gift wrapping on hand—just bring your festive spirit!

Please [RSVP by 22 November](#) to help us plan. Feel free to reach out if you’d like to contribute additional items or assist in any way (Nicky 0724447277).



Gauteng

We would like to invite all our member school Heads in Gauteng to join in the last term Heads Breakfast for 2024.

TOPIC: Reflection on and appreciation of the year 2024. Let's remember the challenges we faced while appreciating and celebrating the stories of the gifts we received and those we shared along the way.

FACILITATOR: Hettie Hedwig

DATE: 30 November 2024

TIME: 08h30 (for 09h00) – 11h00

VENUE: Constantia Montessori, 525 Chopin Street, Constantia Park, Pretoria

[RSVP HERE](#) by midday on 20 November 2024

WC Heads of school breakfast feedback

It was a wonderful morning enjoyed by all Heads of school at the Clay Café in Hout Bay. We would like to extend our gratitude to Kym van Straaten and all the staff at The Bay Academy for hosting the 2024 regional special interest group meetings. The importance of collaboration and unison when working towards the common goal of serving the child, in line with Maria Montessori's philosophy cannot be overstated.



Henry Ford said: "Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success" this highlights the journey from assembling a team to the commitment of unity and collaboration reminding educators that achieving positive outcomes requires continual cooperation and shared responsibility.

When teachers collaborate, it creates a support network that prioritises the child's developmental needs. Each participant in a collaborative approach brings unique insights and skills. The collective efforts of adults cohesively working together and showing mutual respect fosters the value of teamwork, empathy, and cooperation.

Working together for the benefit of the child requires trust, shared vision, and ongoing communication. When educators unite with the common purpose of nurturing a child's potential, the result is an environment where children can thrive both intellectually and emotionally.

Interesting readings

A beautifully written article about - the [Spiritual Preparation of the Adult by Guadalupe Borbolla](#), AMI 3–6 and 12–18 Trainer.

As one of three preparations of the adult, Guadalupe Borbolla in this article refers to spiritual preparation of the adult not as referring to religion but rather ‘the intangible parts of development: those psychic, emotional, intellectual aspects of human development. Spirituality, the quality of being concerned with the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things’. She goes on to say that: ‘Spirituality involves the recognition of a feeling, or sense, or belief that there is something greater than myself, something more to being human than sensory experience, and that the greater whole of which we are part is cosmic or divine in nature.’

- Shared by Dawn Brochenin SAMA Tier Representative – Cape Town

Sharon Caldwell from Real Learning shared the following two resources on the SAMA Chat group, I am sharing here for those who are not on that Chat group.

Parental Support

As I have been searching for resources for the current Real Learning course, I came across a video with Miki Kashtan, an NVC trainer. I consider Miki to be one of the gentlest and wisest people on this planet. This conversation [Sugar, Screens, and Parenting](#) gives a totally different take on children and screen time than that which is commonly put out there. Well worth watching.

Teachers Resources

Another resource I stumbled upon that is too good not to share: Red Grammer Music and Lyrics. I have just come across this work. So much that one finds in terms of songs from children is cheesy and condescending. I sampled a few of the songs (following a reference in a Marshall Rosenberg Book). The lyrics read like poetry, and some of the music is lovely in its own right. There are different genres ranging from orchestral to country. If I had to choose just one resource for songs to introduce in any environment, Montessori or otherwise, this is the one I would use. There are songs here that would appeal to younger and older children, and if you can work out a way to buy the CDs they apparently come with instrument only versions as well. There are videos and lyrics available online for many of the [Red Grammer songs](#). Or you may follow them on Spotify Here:

<https://open.spotify.com/artist/7tMAjOyRSfmuyinnMOFa5M?si=poKUzCe8Q2mDM7ZJDfNWqA>

[A Live tour of the Montessori toddler classroom in Amsterdam done by Simone Davies from The Montessori Notebook](#) (22min) which she shared in January of 2018, we hope this will encourage deep reflecting and inspiration to all those wanting to improve their toddler environments.

Birth to three ZOOM discussion group – Language development Feedback

Further to the last ZOOM we had a while ago, and the contribution of poems, songs and ideas for books submitted by everyone who attended that session, the link to the folder with all this information was shared with attendees.

We also received the following from one participant to share with everyone (thank you to Michelle Kemp for her contributions and willingness to share them with everyone).

I have attached a couple of ideas, specifically showing how easy it is to make short books on Canva.

The first is a story I made for my nephew about his visit to our farm. I used real photos and edited as needed to make them fit the story. I have altered them to not show any faces etc.

The next is a story I made for World Pangolin Day. It's cartoon-based and is aimed at 3-6 but shows how stories can be made into books. I printed it as a PDF and got Postnet to bind it.

I have also attached a fun song that we do for insects based on head, shoulders, knees and toes.

I am in the process of editing a short story that I wrote this week based on an interaction with some squirrels that I watched from my window. If I have chance, I will try to send that through as well.

I am hoping to put some of my story telling stories onto paper and trying to find a way to make them available. Some of them are based on other people's works like Michael Dorer's, or my story about the three triangle sisters, which is based on a song from YouTube. This means that I can't publish them (I'm looking at publishing some of my original ones eventually) and I am open to ideas if there are ways to share them - most are elementary. I also have copies of my published series about animals on my farm and their adventures that I'm selling, if there is any interest - they are more for 3-9. Sorry for the side tangent.

Have a lovely day

Michelle

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